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ABSTRACT

Two major policies that are followed at Yale University are discussed by its president in this document. The first is that policy of accepting all qualified students into Yale College, regardless of ability to pay. This policy has met in the past with great controversy in light of the financial problems that higher education institutions all over the U.S. are facing. However, it is felt that the high academic standards of the College would of necessity be lowered if only those students who are able to pay the high tuition are to be granted admission. In addition, it is felt that such a policy helps to perpetuate the great American dream that any person with potential, regardless of financial background, may rise as far as his ability allows. The other policy defended in this paper is that of granting tenure to senior professors at the University. Arguments have arisen concerning this policy on the grounds that tenure promotes laziness in professors and keeps younger persons with more advanced ideas from joining the teaching profession. It is felt at Yale, however, that those professors granted senior status have been so carefully screened before they are tenured that the University can be certain that tenure will not breed laxity. In addition, the presence of tenure promotes academic freedom that can be achieved in almost no other way. (HS)

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Yale University: 1971–72

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The Report of the President

Yale University: 1971 – 72

This Report cannot complete the discussion I began in my Report of last January. The faculty's recommendations and the Corporation's actions in response to the important Report of the Study Group on Yale College will not take shape until the end of the calendar year at the earliest. So the future cannot be foretold until the faculty resumes its discussions. I hope to circulate a supplemental Report early next year which will be more informative and more conclusive about both the educational and financial future of Yale.

There are, though, some matters pertinent to Yale's prospects which deserve more extensive treatment at this time. First is the Yale College faculty's general reaction to the financial problems of the University and their view of the part the faculty might play in meeting them. Second, our alumni and our public who are constantly asked for financial support deserve an explanation of our insistence on two obviously expensive policies: the admission of students without regard to their ability to pay; and the award to the senior faculty of appointments for their working lifetime (tenure, so-called).

The Report of the Study Committee on Yale College, often referred to as the Dahl Report because of its chairman, Sterling Professor Robert A. Dahl, was not received by the faculty until after the Spring vacation. The somewhat radical alteration in the academic calendar and the timetable for achievement of a baccalaureate degree sug-

2

gested in the appendix of that Report were motivated by the significant contribution they would make to Yale's budgetary balance. They also were designed to permit a larger entering class without enlarging the size of the community in residence at any one time. I urged the faculty to give priority to the consideration of these matters, so that their financial and admissions consequences could be given effect speedily if a consensus should emerge. This meant that the consideration of proposals for more effective use of the faculty through the residential colleges and other important educational proposals in the Report was postponed.

The faculty discussions revealed two very reasonable and proper concerns on the part of many. First, what really is the magnitude of the University's financial problem; and to what extent does it require either major cutback in educational expenditure or major change in student population or academic calendar in order to produce more tuition income? Second, even if the problem does require unwelcome remedy, what are the plausible options? For example, is the extension of the curricular calendar a better way of using faculty and facilities more intensively than would be a summer term or an absolute expansion of the number of students in residence during the traditional academic year?

The most important aspect of the faculty discussion was that, with very few exceptions, there was no wishful effort to dismiss serious consideration of the financial problem. In fact, there was a widespread willingness to explore ways in which the faculty might contribute to its

solution. It was necessary, however, to permit time for a faculty group to have their own doctor examine the patient, and to canvass the plausible remedies for the financial ailments. Faculty and students from Yale College and the Graduate School who had been designated as members of a University Calendar Committee were asked to serve along with three members of the faculties of the Graduate School and Yale College designated by their respective deans. While previously committed summer plans prevented some of these persons from serving continuously, the core of this omnibus group has been working intensively and hopes to bring a report back to the faculty in September.

At its last meeting in June I informed the faculty of Yale College that while the President and Fellows had no firm preconceptions about which of the major options was preferable, it was important for a recommendation to be forwarded in the fall so that we could take convincing action to eliminate the deficit without further drastic cuts in educational outlays. Ultimately, of course, the trustees will have to make their own judgment about how best to assure Yale's long-run quality and competitive drawing power for the students and faculty of highest potential. Hopefully widespread discussion and expression of student and faculty opinion in the fall will assure that the Corporation's judgment is well informed. My own hope that the Dahl group's proposals might result in a positive recommendation last spring proved in hindsight to have been over-optimistic.

It is a great tribute to the spirit and dedication of the

Yale community that the thrust of the faculty's determination has been to take the measure of the financial problem and do whatever is necessary in such a way that the educational quality of Yale is not jeopardized. This is far healthier than budget cutting by administrative formula, or major calendar or curricular change by Corporation decree. Also, the strongest basis on which Yale can "go to the country" for major capital support from her alumni and friends is not only to have her own house in order, but to be able to come forward with an educational prospect which commands widespread enthusiasm by all sectors of the community. The development of such a prospectus will be the main business of the University this coming year. Faculty views will be of central importance. Alumni opinion will be solicited through the new Assembly and Executive Committee of the Association of Yale Alumni.

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When financial stringency requires an open-minded re-examination of everything we do and how we do it, it is not unnatural that some should question two very expensive policies which are also embraced by our major rivals. The first is the admission of men and women to Yale College without regard to their ability to pay. The second is the award of tenure, or lifetime appointments, to the senior faculty.

The first policy, the availability of aid to all who need it once they are admitted on the basis of their promise, obviously costs a very substantial amount. It is hard to put a definite figure on it. Although the total scholarship and loan bill for Yale College is slightly in excess of four

million dollars a year, just how much it could be reduced before the quality of the class would deteriorate badly is hard to say. The point is, though, that we do attempt to eliminate financial circumstance from the admissions decision. We do this even though we know that for every person we accept there are two more who are almost as well qualified, certainly able to get by at Yale. Probably one of these two could afford to pay somewhere near the full tuition and room and board bill.

It is my own conviction that this policy of admission without regard to ability to pay is of vital importance to Yale's ability to attract applications from some of the country's most promising secondary school students. It is also very important to the quality of Yale as a place for the intellectual and human development of those in their late teens and early twenties. Finally, it is important if Yale is to help our nation to remain an open and mobile society.

There is a lot of rhetoric in the air just now which seeks to disparage "elitism." I said in last year's Report that Yale is inherently "elitist" as long as it exercises any judgment about who should come when it cannot admit all who want to; about who should obtain degrees and honors when not all perform equally well; and about who should be appointed and promoted to its faculties when not all who desire to come and stay can be hired or kept on. The question, then, is on what basis should these judgments be made? The simple, but not exactly self-explanatory answer is: "the merits." If an aristocratic element is an inevitable result of the selectivity of any university of quality, let it, at least, in Jefferson's words,

be an "aristocracy of talent," not an aristocracy of family pocketbook.

This does not mean there is no room for special efforts, even special hospitality to particular categories of applicants. One such category is applicants related to alumni. Any private university depends on the depth of alumni loyalty. Those roots are made more firm by continuity down the generations. While I was reluctant to believe it at the time, I am now satisfied that the administration of Yale admissions not too long ago was not sufficiently responsive to the Corporation's directive on this matter. Some among the admissions staff and committees ignored alumni relationships. This hurt us. We must be willing to give the alumni relative the benefit of any doubts, even though there are always risks and subjective judgments involved. The only limit on special consideration for the alumni-related applicant is that he or she should not be favored if other applicants are clearly and convincingly more deserving. We would lose the confidence of the schools if we were to clearly override obvious superiority in personal and academic merit. Also such notorious favoritism would not be good for, or in most cases desired by, the applicant.

The other group which receives special recruiting effort and a somewhat greater willingness to take risks in admissions decisions are the disadvantaged minorities, especially blacks. This reflects the conscious desire of your trustees to have Yale help to rectify the generations of socially imposed racial handicap, and contribute to the broadening of leadership opportunity for the nation's tra-

ditionally oppressed minorities; not only Blacks, but also Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, and American Indians. So in these ways the "merits," assessed purely in terms of academic and proven human potential, may be a bit skewed by the special concern appropriate for alumni-related applicants and candidates from minority groups. However, the numbers involved in these categories do not dominate either the applicant pool or the matriculating class.

Should ability to pay be given weight? I think not, very largely because of what it would do to the morale, the pride and confidence of both those who are admitted and those who admit them. Most students whom Yale would want to admit do not, themselves, want to feel that they are chosen on the basis of their pocketbook rather than their talent. The more socially conscious of them are also very much opposed to favoritism on the basis of wealth. They do not think that the opportunity of the son or daughter should depend on the affluence of the father rather than upon their own promise and motivation.

All admissions staff members and two score faculty devote the better part of two early spring months to the anguishing process of selection. Their zeal and dedication in this anguishing job depend on their feeling that they are invited to do their best to admit the people who will make the most of Yale's extraordinary opportunity. They understand the importance of alumni identification with Yale. They share the sense of special mission of a privileged institution to do its part to overcome the racial inequities of the past. However, I think we would jeopard-

ize or at least sap their sense of purpose in their difficult work, if they were to be told that pocketbook should override merit in their judgments about who should have the privilege of Yale.

The most important consideration is what a test of affluence would do to the quality of Yale education for those who are admitted and do decide to come here. The loss of pride and self-respect on the part of those who felt they were admitted only because of their ability to pay has already been adverted to. That itself would sully the morale of the place.

There is also the very significant educational value of diversity. There would be, of course, considerable diversity of talent and of interest even among a predominantly high income group. (There is no indication today that the sons and daughters of the affluent are conformists! Indeed the "alienated" and the "activists" have emerged disproportionately from relatively privileged backgrounds). If there were not a diversity of personal and family background, including income, however, the mutual education of students would suffer. Quite consistently the graduates of the last ten years have ascribed a significant part of the value of a Yale education to the diversity of their classmates.

If we were to cut back student aid drastically it is likely that it would be the middle income families who would be priced out of our market. Foundation programs aimed at minorities and government programs favoring the very poor would continue to make it possible for those at the bottom of the economic pyramid to attend Yale. High

incomes would be demanded of the rest. Such a policy would weaken our ability to attract those from the professional and intellectual groups whose talent and zest for learning may be the greatest. In short, I am convinced that if we had an affluence requirement for Yale admission, the quality of the class and the quality of the education they receive from each other would suffer drastically.

Finally, I think that Yale is among those relatively few institutions which offer a significant upward boost to those who graduate into a competitive society. Scornful cynics may pass this off as a meretricious inheritance from a status-conscious past. Those of us who believe in a first-rate liberal education and who take pride in Yale's dedication to undergraduate education amidst the resources of a major university believe that Yale College does enlarge both the capacities and opportunities of most of its students to a degree rarely matched by any other institution. It is terribly important to the country at large that such a university college should be open to all applicants to compete for admission on the merits, without financial handicap.

If those institutions which do confer a special privilege were to return to financial status as the price of undergraduate admission, we would undercut the confidence that America can still be an open society. It is our obligation to try to keep alive the widespread feeling that there is room at the top for those who have what it takes, and that success in America is still more dependent upon effort and talent than upon status or influence. This will always be an ideal, not ever completely vindicated in reality. But pre-

cisely because it is so challenged by the over-organization of society, it is all the more urgent that the country's outstanding colleges should, to the extent they can, make a convincing effort to ration their places on the merits.

We already demand of our needy students more self-help by way of job , loans, or postponed tuition than some of our rivals do. As a consequence we lose to our competitors some students to whom we have offered admission. When we can afford it, we should increase the proportion of gift assistance to meet this competition. I am convinced, however, that in assessing our financial priorities we must stick to the commitment made by the President and Fellows in a more prosperous time for universities, almost ten years ago, to admit undergraduate students without regard to their parents' financial situation, and then offer to those who need it whatever assistance will allow them to come, even if a significant part of that assistance must eventually be repaid.

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Of all the folkways of university life, perhaps "tenure" is least comprehensible to those whose professional or executive life involves the staffing of other forms of organized activity — business, finance, government, or non-profit service. In prosperous times the tradition of academic tenure evokes puzzlement. In times when colleges and universities are struggling for financial survival, tenure is challenged with increasing frequency.

How, it is asked, can we talk glibly about the knowledge explosion or the exponential rate of change — with all its risk of rapid intellectual obsolescence — and at

the same time lock ourselves into lifetime obligations to people in their mid-thirties? Not only do we risk becoming stuck with the obsolete, but we remove the most popularly understood incentive to higher levels of performance. Furthermore, since even in financially easy times, university resources are finite, every "slot" mortgaged for a full professor's lifetime blocks the hope for advancement by some promising members of oncoming generations. When resources are so tight that the faculty must be pruned, because of tenure most of the pruning is at the expense of the junior faculty. Many juniors are more up to date in their command of new methods and problems in fast-moving fields and many of them are more talented than are some of the elders.

The Association of American University Professors — the organized guardian of academic freedom and tenure — has recently taken some pains to make it clear that tenure is not an absolute protection against dismissal. They say that a person can be fired for gross misconduct or neglect of duty. They assert that even a person with tenure may be terminated for financial reasons. Such termination is permissible in their eyes, however, only by a process which puts the burden of proof upon the university and in which the victim's faculty peers are both judge and jury, subject to final disposition by the trustees.

The practical fact in most places, and the unexceptional rule at Yale, is that tenure is for all normal purposes a guarantee of appointment until retirement age. Physical or mental incapacity, some chronic disability, some frightful act of moral turpitude, or persistent neglect of all

university responsibilities have on a very few occasions in the past resulted in "negotiated" termination settlements. However, even in extreme circumstances there is a deep reluctance to compromise the expectations of tenure. For both human and institutional reasons it is the practice to ride it out even in cases where performance has fallen way below reasonable expectations. When it comes to financial reasons for termination, in all discussions about the possible shut-down of a program or department it has been assumed that the university would have an obligation to find a place at Yale where those with tenure could continue to work in their field.

In short, as far as Yale is concerned, the efforts of the A.A.U.P. to mollify the critics of tenure by argument that tenure is not an invulnerable shield against dismissal, is of little operational significance. In Yale's case the argument for the policy of granting tenure must be made as though it were virtually a guarantee of appointment until retirement, not as though it were a privilege easily subject to qualification or revocation.

The defense of tenure usually falls into two categories: the need for job security, in order to draw good people into underpaid academic life; and the need to protect the academic freedom of the faculty.

Both of these points are valid; but put thus simply, both grossly understate the significance of tenure to the quality of a first-rate university.

The argument based on the recruitment of faculty, is underscored by the simple fact that as long as most institutions grant tenure then any single institution must go along in order to remain competitive. This is probably

true. However, I am enough of a "Yale chauvinist" to believe that if we were to decide that tenure is a bad thing, put up with only because our rivals offer it, we should find ways to get rid of it. There might even be some trade-off which would allow us to bid for the people we want in terms of specially high salaries, using the savings we thought we might gain by abandoning tenure. So, the argument for the purposes of this discussion has to be made on the grounds that Yale is a better educational and scholarly place because it gives its professors lifetime appointments. I would assert that this would be so even if our competitors did not do so.

The job security argument arose when university faculty were grossly underpaid in comparison with other professional callings. They were even more disadvantaged when compared with the marts of trade and finance. This is still true, especially at both ends of the ladder: the bottom rungs of starting salaries, and the higher rungs of top management compensation. In the middle range, however, academic salaries at a place like Yale are not grossly lower than the earnings of other professional callings. So, the use of job security as bait to persuade people to take a vow of "academic poverty" is not a sufficient argument. (It still has persuasive merit, however, for those institutions which pay sub-standard salaries. Such institutions are the proper concern of not only the A.A.U.P. but should be the concern of a society which has an enormous stake in attracting a sufficient number of people into careers devoted to the higher education of the young and the advancement of knowledge and understanding).

The rationale of academic tenure, however, is somewhat

different from job security in the industrial world, especially in an institution which wants its teachers to be engaged in pushing forward the frontiers of learning. This lies in the fact that contributions to human knowledge and understanding which add something significant to what has gone before involve a very high risk and a very long-term intellectual investment. This is true especially of those whose life is more devoted to thought, experimentation, and writing than it is to practice.

If teaching is to be more than the retailing of the known, and if research is to seek real breakthroughs in the explanation of man and the cosmos, then teachers must be scholars, and scholarship must be more than the refinement of the inherited store of knowledge. If scholarship is to question assumptions and to take the risk of testing new hypotheses, then it cannot be held to a timetable which demands proof of pay-out to satisfy some review committee.

I think that even with their privileges and immunities our academic communities are often too timid in their explorations. The fear of failure in the eyes of the peerage inhibits some of our colleagues, even when they do have tenure. Too many seek the safe road of detailed elaboration of accepted truth rather than the riskier paths of true exploration, which might defy conventional assumptions. Boldness would suffer if the research and scholarship of a mature faculty were to be subject to periodic score-keeping, on pain of dismissal if they did not score well. Then what should be a venture in creative discovery would for almost everyone degenerate into a safe-sided

devotion to riskless footnote gathering. Authentication would replace discovery as the goal. The results might not startle the world, but they would be impressive in quantitative terms and invulnerable to devastating attack.

Purely economic connotations of "job security" greatly understate the distinctive aspect of the academic calling. At its best the university expects a person literally to make a lifetime investment in his special way of looking at the human and natural experience, in the hope that he will contribute something of permanence to the understanding of some corner of the universe.

The second, and most highly touted, rationale for tenure is academic freedom. This concern, traditionally, has focused on the privilege of immunity from "outside" interference. Within the memory of those still active, "McCarthyism" is the most telling nightmare.

Of course there are corrupting influences, financial, institutional, and professional. By and large, however, of all the types of institutions which gather people together in a common effort, the university remains the least inhibiting to variety in ideas, convictions, styles, and tastes. It encourages its members to pursue doggedly any idea in which they have confidence. Progress in the world of thought depends on people having enough freedom and serenity to take the risk of being wrong.

This struggle to preserve the integrity of the institution and the freedom of its faculty members from external coercion is never over. However, despite the winds of controversy inherent in a troubled time, whetted occasionally by demagogic desire to make academia the scape-

goat for society's ills, the ability of a strong university to give its faculty convincing protection against such threats will depend more on the steadfastness of the institution as a whole than it will on tenure.

The dramatic image of the university under siege from taxpayers, politicians, or even occasional alumni is a vivid but not the most difficult aspect of the pressures which tend to erode academic freedom. The more subtle condition of academic freedom is that faculty members, once they have proved their potential during a period of junior probation, should not feel beholden to *anyone*, especially Department Chairmen, Deans, Provosts, or Presidents, for favor, let alone for survival. In David Riesman's phrase teachers and scholars should, insofar as possible, be truly "inner directed" — guided by their own intellectual curiosity, insight, and conscience. In the development of their ideas they should not be looking over their shoulders either in hope of favor or in fear of disfavor from anyone other than the judgment of an informed and critical posterity.

In strong universities assuring freedom from intellectual conformity coerced *within* the institution is even more of a concern than is the protection of freedom from external interference.

This spirit of academic freedom within the university has a value which goes beyond protecting the individual's broad scope of thought and inquiry. It bears crucially upon the distinctive quality of the university as a community. If a university is alive and productive it is a place where colleagues are in constant dispute; defending their

latest intellectual enthusiasm, attacking the contrary views of others. From this trial by intellectual combat emerges a sharper insight, later to be blunted by other, sharper minds. It is vital that this contest be uninhibited by fear of reprisal. Sides must be taken only on the basis of the merits of a proposition. Jockeying for favor by trimming the argument because some colleague or some group will have the power of academic life or death in some later process of review would falsify and subvert the whole exercise.

I have not been able to devise, nor have I heard of, any regime of periodic review with the sanction of dismissal which would not have disastrous effect. It would both dampen the willingness to take long-term intellectual risks and inhibit if not corrupt the free and spirited exchanges upon which the vitality of a community of scholars depends. This, not the aberrational external interference, is the threat to the freedom of the academic community which tenure seeks to mitigate.

Also, I do not think the costs of tenure are very high for a first-rate university. Those who gain tenure at Yale do not rest in happy security on their professorial laurels. Indeed, in my relatively brief experience, almost without exception it is the elders who are productive up to and well beyond retirement. They are the ones affected with the migraine headaches and other forms of psychosomatic traumae, lest their life should ebb away without the completion of their great work.

As a practical matter of personnel policy, the very fact

that the professorial promotion is a lifetime commitment of university resources makes the departmental and committee process of promotion to tenure much more rigorous and hard-headed than it otherwise would be. If there were a confident feeling that mistakes in judgment could be rectified by some later review process we would all go soft and give colleagues of whom we are personally fond an excessive benefit of all doubt. Realization that the commitment is for keeps helps to hold the standards high. So, I would venture that whatever gains might be made by reserving the right to a second guess would be more than offset by the laxity which would come to soften the first guess. In short, we would not have as good a senior faculty as we now do, if tenure were not the consequence of promotion to senior rank.

Such a pragmatic calculation, however, is nothing compared to the value to the university of trying to maintain the ideal of the independence of the individual in his own intellectual pursuit.

When I assumed my office I said that:

> . . . there is a common ethic which draws some men to a university in preference to any of the many other groups which are now publicly and privately organized to discover as well as apply knowledge. Affluence often, prestige sometimes, is forgone in order to be able to spend one's time and energy and mind upon whatever seems to him most intriguing and exciting; not to be directed by what some client or customer may request, or by what some absentee bureaucrat is willing to support.

In the light of intervening reflection, I would now add that this "common ethic" also requires broad protection from administrators and the colleagues within the

community, no more and no less than from the "absentee bureaucrats" in Washington to whom I was then referring.

Tenure, then, is not a luxurious indulgence. Even in times when scarcity of resources threatens the existence of whole departments, I would affirm that our mission requires Yale to give that measure of encouragement to independence which only irrevocable appointment can confer.

KINGMAN BREWSTER, JR.

August 28, 1972